with effect from 9.10.1991.

Revision of Bench Mark Price of Natural Rubber

319. SHRI P.C. THOMAS: Will the Minister of COMMERCE to be pleased to state:

(a) whether the cost of production of natural rubber has escalated after its Bench Mark Price was last revised and fixed;

(b) if so, to what extent; and

(c) the steps taken or proposed to be taken by the Government to revise the Bench Mark Price to ensure remunerative price to cultivations?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM): (a) to (c). The Bench Mark Price of Natural Rubber was last fixed at Rs. 2,145/- per Quintal for RMA-4 Grade of rubber on 15th January, 1991 on the basis of the report submitted by the Cost Accounts Branch of the Ministry of Finance during 1990-91 after a study conducted by them taking into account the cost of wages and other inputs.There was a substantial increase of nearly Rs. 4,000/- per ton effected in the Bench Mark price at that time. Unless another assessment is made regarding the cost of production of natural rubber, it would not be possible to indicate the extent to which the cost of production of natural rubber has escalated since January, 1991. The Government have been taking necessary steps to ensure remunerative prices to the cultivators including procurement of natural rubber as a measure of price support.

Shortage of Uniform items for N.C.C. Cadets

320. SHRI DATTATRAYA BANDARU: Will the Minister of DEFENCE to be pleased to state:

(a) whether there is an acute shortage of uniform items for the N.C.C. Cadets;

(b) if so, the extent of shortage and the number of cadets affected; and

(c) the remedial measures taken or proposed to be taken by the Government to overcome this shortage?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF DEFENCE (SHRI SHARAD PAWAR): (a) and (b). While there is no shortage of polyester cotton white shorts and polyester cotton khaki bush shirts, there are some shortages in the other items of uniform. Deficiency in the availability of uniforms is managed by issuing lesser number of items to the Cadets till deliveries in respect of supply orders placed on the DGS&D start materialising

(c) Indents for the provision of uniform items in bulk have already been placed with the Directorate General of Supplies and Disposal.

Excise Duty on Cottage Industries

321. SHRI DATTATRAYA BANDARU: Will the Minister of FINANCE to be pleased to state:

(a) whether cottage industries are exemted from excise duty;

(b) whether hand made panel doors and windows fall under the category of cottage industries;

(c) if so, whether 30 per cent excise duty was imposed on these items in the 1991 budget; and

(d) if so, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI RAMESHWAR THAKUR) : (a) and (b). Hand made

panel doors and windows are covered under cottage sector as well as other sectors. A unit, whether in cottage sector or other sector having an aggregate value of annual clearances upto Rs 20 lakhs is fully exempt from excise duty under notification No. 175/86-CE, dated the 1st March, 1986 subject to conditions stipulated therein. For slightly larger units whose annual clearance for home consumption does not exceed Rs. 2 crores, the concession is graded as under:

(i) First Rs. 20 lakhs: Nil duty

(ii) Next Rs. 55 lakhs: 20%

Clearance in excess of Rs. 75 lakhs are assessable at the normal rate of 30%. As long as a manufacturer under cottage sector is not having its annual clearances above Rs 20 lakhs it continues to be exempt from excise duty.

(c) and (d). Basic excise duty at 30% ad valorem was imposed on panel doors with effect from 25th July, 1991. This was done keeping in view the fact that these are similar to flush doors in terms of functions and prices which have been attracting basic excise duty at 30% ad valorem.

[*Translation*]

Permanent wage review committee for Central Government Employees

322. SHRI PANKAJ CHOWDHARY: Will the Minister of FINANCE to be pleased to state:

(a) whether Central Government employees associations have urged the Government to constitute a Permanent Wage Review Committee and merge Dearness Allowance with basic pay as per the recommendations of the Fourth Central Pay Commission;

(b) whether the Government propose to implement these recommendations;

(c) if so, the time by which the decision is likely to be taken in this regard; and

(d) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI SHANTARAM POTDUKHE): (a) to (d). The demands relating to constitution of Permanent Wage Review Committee and merger of Dearness Allowance with basic pay were discussed in the last meeting of the National Council of JCM held on 21-9-91 where it was decided to set up an Expert Group and to constitute a Committee respectively to examine these demands.

Construction of Bus-Queue Shelters in Rural Areas in Delhi

323. SHRI PANKAJ CHOWDHARY: Will the Minister of SURFACE TRANSPORT to be pleased to state:

(a) whether there are no bus queue shelters at bus stops in rural areas of Delhi;

(b) whether the Delhi Transport Corporation propose to construct bus queue shelters at bus stops in rural areas of Delhi in near future;

(c) if so, by what time; and

(d) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF SURFACE TRANSPORT (SHRI JAGDISH TYTLER): (a) No, Sir. There are 184 bus queue shelters at various bus stops in rural areas of Delhi.

(b) At present 320 bus queue shelters are under construction out of which 68 shel-